

REMARKS

Please reconsider the application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Applicant thanks the Examiner for carefully considering this application.

I. Disposition of Claims

Claims 11-16 are pending in this application. Claim 11 is independent. The remaining claims depend from claim 11.

II. Amendments to Claim 11

Claim 11 has been amended to include the limitation of using a blower to force a stream of heated air into a process chamber. This limitation is fully supported in the specification, and does not constitute new matter. The misspelling of “liquefied” has also been corrected in the amended claim 11.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C § 103

Claims 11-13, 15, and 16

Claims 11-13, 15, and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,146,596 (Hill) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,974,528 (Barcell). Claim 11 has been amended in this reply to clarify the claimed invention. To the extent that this rejection may still apply to the amended claim, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

As amended, claim 11 recites a method that uses a blower to force a stream of heated air into an inlet of a process chamber. The stream of heated air passes through the material to volatilize hydrocarbons. The stream of heated air containing the

hydrocarbons passes through a first condenser to form liquefied hydrocarbons, which are collected.

Hill discloses using a blower fan to establish a vacuum below the material (column 3, lines 38-45). The soil is heated by radiant heaters (16) from the top, while the vacuum below causes the hot gases to be pulled downward (column 3, lines 38-45). Hydrocarbon vapors recovered from the material may then be liquefied and collected (column 3, lines 45-50).

Similar to Hill, Barcell uses a rack (14) containing a multiplicity of burners or heaters (16), preferably infrared heaters, positioned over the soil in the process chamber (column 3, lines 18-22). A vacuum pump provides the impetus for downward movement of the heated vapors and ambient air from outside the process chamber through the soil (column 3, lines 24-28). Barcell discloses “a blower 32 that draws air *from* chamber 4 and 6 by low pressure at its inlet.”

The method recited in amended claim 11 forces heated air *into* the process chamber. In contrast, Barcell and Hill disclose drawing heated air *from* the process chamber. Advantageously, the present invention does not cause the surface soil (*i.e.*, those nearest the heaters) to become dried out and hard, which prevents the flow of air through the soil.

In view of the above, Hill and Barcell, whether considered separately or in combination, fail to show or suggest the invention recited in claim 11 as amended. Thus, claim 11 as amended is patentable over Hill and Barcell. Dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 14

Claim 14 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Hill in view of Barcell, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,991,690 (Bork). Claim 11, from which claim 14 depends, has been amended in this reply to clarify the claimed invention. To the extent that this rejection may still apply, the rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, Hill and Barcell, whether considered separately or in combination, fail to show or suggest the invention recited in claim 11 as amended. Bork fails to provide that which Hill and Barcell lack with respect to the claimed invention. The Applicant notes that the Examiner has only relied on Bork to show the use of a series of condensers and blowers to improve the level of condensation achieved. Bork neither shows nor suggests using a blower to force a stream of heated air into a process chamber as recited in claim 11.

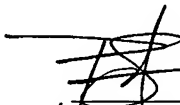
In view of the above, Hill, Barcell, and Bork, whether considered separately or in combination, fail to show or suggest the invention recited in claim 11 as amended. Thus, claim 14, which depends from claim 11, is patentable over Hill, Barcell, and Bork for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. Conclusion

Applicant believes this reply is fully responsive to all outstanding issues and places this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 05542/019002).

Respectfully submitted,

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